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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses elementary school Chinese language textbooks for teaching reading and writing in primary grades in the People's Republic of China. The paper begins by examining the characteristics of the Chinese written language, particularly how the reforms of written Chinese in China since the 1950s have affected instructional materials. Methods used to teach reading and writing and popularize standard Chinese or Mandarin are examined through a content analysis of 38 children's books and 12 teachers' manuals for teaching the Chinese language. The paper concludes that children learn to speak Mandarin as they learn to read and write, and that the same materials are used to teach reading, writing, listening, speaking, and handwriting through a multi-modal approach. The paper notes that two methods for teaching Chinese characters are used: the Contextual Teaching approach and the Concentrated Drill method. (Two tables of Chinese characters, 1 table of data, and 27 footnotes are included; a list of the manuals and texts studied is attached.) (RS)

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AN ANALYSIS OF CHINESE PRIMARY READING AND WRITING TEXTBOOKS IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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SUMMARY

The article is an analysis of elementary school Chinese language textbooks for teaching reading and writing in primary grades in the People's Republic of China. The article begins by examining the characteristics of the Chinese written language, particularly how the reforms of written Chinese in China since the 1950s have effected instructional materials. Methods used to teach reading and writing and popularize standard Chinese or Mandarin are examined through a content analysis of the children's and teachers' materials for teaching Chinese language. Children learn to speak Mandarin as they learn to read and write. The same materials are used to teach reading, writing, listening, speaking and handwriting through a multi-modal approach. Two methods for teaching Chinese characters are used: the Contextual Teaching Approach and the Concentrated Drill Method.

An Analysis of Chinese Primary Reading and Writing Textbooks in the People's Republic of China

This article examines the characteristics of the Chinese written language, particularly reforms in written Chinese in the People's Republic of China since 1949. Policies with regard to reading and writing instruction and the popularization of standard Chinese or Mandarin are examined through an analysis of the methods and materials for teaching Chinese language in grades one through three.

CHINESE CHARACTERS AND LITERACY

The Chinese writing system may have originated as early as 6,000 B.C. and was originally pictographic.[1] The visual picture represented meaning, and it initially looked like the word it represented. As Chinese characters evolved, these pictographs came to be associated with other related ideas and became more abstract and ideographic in nature.

Although China has the oldest living written language, literacy was elusive for many. Throughout its history, the degree of illiteracy in traditional China was large. Goody cites DeFrancis' figures stating that by 1950, only about 10 to 15% of the Chinese population were literate, with a figure of from 1 to 2% literacy throughout Chinese history[2, 3]. Recent census reports indicate the percentage of illiterates at 23.6% consisting largely of people living in the countryside, the elderly, those whose education was interrupted during the Cultural Revolution, and elementary school dropouts[4]. However DeFrancis considers the census figure virtually worthless if any functional definition of literacy is used. He even doubts whether those living in the countryside will attain such a level in the foreseeable future.[5]

MODERN CHINESE

The Chinese language has eight major dialects. The main differences between them are in pronunciation. However, the differences between them can be so great as to render them mutually unintelligible, particularly the northern and southern dialects. Nonetheless, the written form and the grammar are basically the same.[6] Mandarin, the dialect spoken in the area around Beijing, is the standard in contemporary China.

In Chinese the symbols or characters represent both meaning and sound. Over 80% of Chinese characters in current use are pictophonetic compounds. These are characters which are composed of a meaning and a phonetic element. The meaning element, called the radical, is the part of a character which represents a class of

meaning. For example, most words dealing with water would contain the radical for water to indicate its class of meaning. Other classes of meaning would be things such as flora, man, fauna, etc. In contemporary China there are 189 different radicals.[7]

Table 1

The other part of the pictophonetic compound, the phonetic element, gives some clue to the character's pronunciation. As many of these phonetic elements were coined hundreds or even thousands of years ago, they may only minimally reflect the pronunciation in modern times. Actually only about 39% of these pictophonetic compounds give any clue to the word's pronunciation.[8] Although this presents problems in learning them, Chinese characters have served in uniting China and Chinese people internationally through the written word. While a character might be pronounced differently in different dialects, its meaning remains the same.

Table 2

MODERN LANGUAGE REFORM

Many attempts have been made to reform the Chinese written language throughout its long history. In all, about five distinct stages can be traced in the evolution of Chinese characters to the modern era.[9] The simplification of characters under the Communists would be the sixth. In 1951 Mao Zedong made a far-reaching pronouncement, he said that:

> Our written language must be reformed. It should take the direction of phoneticization common to all the languages of the world. It must be national inform, and the alphabet and the projects (related to it) should be elaborated on the basis of the existing Chinese character.[10]

During the 1950s many language reforms were initiated and put into practice. These included the establishment of a common dialect, Mandarin, called **Putonghua** or "common speech." Mandarin became the language of instruction in the teaching of Chinese to children in Chinese language class where Chinese reading and writing were taught.

In addition, a Romanized alphabet was established for use in beginning reading instruction in order to teach Mandarin to all Chinese children. Children learn the Mandarin pronunciation of words as they learn to read it instead of its pronunciation in their local dialect. This alphabet, called the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, or **Pinyin** (which literally means "spell-sound"), is the Roman alphabet used to write Chinese words and is the reason why "Peking" is now spelled and pronounced "Beijing."

Lastly, a major effort was the simplification of many of the traditional characters which included a reduction in the number of strokes and of radicals. It has long been believed that one of the obstacles to literacy has been the difficulty of learning Chinese characters. In fact the President of the Chinese Academy of Science is said to have stated that it took two years longer to achieve literacy in Chinese than in an alphabetic language. Character simplification was done through reducing the number of strokes in very complex characters and borrowing phonetic aspects of some characters for others having a similar or the same pronunciation.[11]

Zhou En-lai made it clear that the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet was not to replace the Chinese characters. Characters would not be abandoned for an alphabetic writing system.[12] The policy is to use pinyin to popularize Mandarin and to serve as a tool in beginning reading instruction in which the Mandarin dialect is taught.

TEACHERS' MANUALS AND METHODS FOR TEACHING READING IN CHINA

Teacher Education

Currently nationally prepared materials are used for teaching reading in China in most places. These materials have been designed to meet the needs of all children learning to read in China, including those who do not speak the standard dialect, Mandarin. At best elementary school teachers in China have attended a teachers college, but many have only a high school education or some post-secondary training. Colleges and universities devoted to teacher education generally prepare junior and senior high school teachers.

The Importance of Teacher's Manuals

Because of the limited preparation of many elementary school teachers, particularly those in rural areas, the content of teachers' manuals and the materials used to teach reading are very important indicators of what actually happens in the classroom. It is not unusual to find all the teachers who teach the same grade on the same page in the school books. Teachers of the same grade often prepare lessons together, and the manual tells the teachers how many hours each lesson should take.

Description of the Study

A careful examination of the first six volumes of the teachers' manuals and children's textbooks for the first three grades of Chinese language class was conducted in order to determine the methods and procedures used in teaching Chinese language. In the first three grades Chinese children learn the majority of characters taught in elementary school. Therefore an analysis of methods and practices associated with these volumes should indicate the nature of primary Chinese language instruction.[13]

Materials Studied

There have been some changes in the Chinese language curriculum due to the extension of elementary and secondary school from ten to twelve years. The Chinese language textbook materials used immediately after the Cultural Revolution are called the Ten Year Program[14] and refer to the total number of years spent in elementary, junior and senior middle or secondary school. (Actually at one point during the Cultural Revolution schooling was reduced to a total of nine years.) Five of the years of the Ten Year Program period were spent in elementary school. The Five Year Program refers to the next edition of Chinese language texts used in elementary school. With the recent expansion of the elementary school curriculum to six years, the latest edition of reading materials is called the Six Year Program. All of the materials for the new Six Year edition became available in China by the end of the 1985-86 school year.[15]

The editions analyzed for Volume One, Chinese Language, in this study are the teachers' manual for the Five Year Program[16] and the children's books for both the Five and Six Year Programs[17,18] enabling comparisons between the two editions.[19] A complete list of materials studied are listed in Appendix 1.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF CHINESE LANGUAGE MATERIALS

Stated Goal of Chinese Language Study

The manual for the first volume for teaching Chinese in grade 1 states that language development and cognitive knowledge must be integrated in the teaching of reading, writing, listening and thinking. Another goal is to integrate the abstract aspects of language with concrete things. During Chinese language study knowledge, oral reading, speaking skills and thinking and observational skills are supposed to be developed and integrated with ideological instruction.

While the development of good study habits is also a goal, this has a different meaning from its use in the United States. When one of the members of the U.S. Reading Study Team to China inquired about whether the Chinese taught study skills, the leaders of a teacher training normal school found the idea intriguing but reported that they didn't.[20] Apparently, their idea of good study habits means being "diligent" and hard-working.

Specific Objectives of Language Training

In the first semester of grade 1 the students are responsible for learning and writing the Pinyin alphabet. Students are expected to learn 282 characters in the first semester, pronounce

them, be able to read and write them and understand their meanings. The students also learn 58 radicals and the principles for stroke order in writing Chinese characters.

There has been a consistent reduction in the number of characters from the Ten Year Program when children learned 292 characters in Volume 1. In the newest Six Year edition, children learn 260 characters. This indicates a definite trend toward reducing the number of characters learned per book in an effort to spread out the number of characters over six instead of five years of elementary school as the schools have returned to the pre-Cultural Revolution standards.

(Insert Table 3)

Learning characters and writing them are closely integrated. Students are required to learn the names of the strokes, the principles of stroke order, common radicals, and be able to write the characters correctly in pencil. They must also be able to read the story lessons studied, and accurately and orally recite some of them from memory.

Students learn how to use pictures clues and must be able to talk about the pictures and answer questions about them in sentences. Since the classroom is considered the place to conduct speech training, both the teacher and the student should be able to speak Putonghua.

Instructional Time

With respect to time, the Chinese teacher's manual contains specific recommendations for the amount of time each lesson should

take. The Five Year teacher's manual explicitly states that if vacations and reviews for tests are excluded and handwriting is included, there are a total of 198 class periods per semester. If the four weeks spent learning Pinyin are excluded, children learn an average of 20 characters a week in the first semester of first grade in the Five Year Program. This has been reduced to 19 characters a week in the Six Year Program, with the added year sixth of elementary school.

Changes Over the Three Editions

When volume 1 of the Five Year Program and Six Year Program are compared, in general they are much the same. The most significant change is the reduction in the number of characters taught, making the newer material a little easier than the Five Year Program. In the Six Year Program, 260 characters are taught as opposed to the 282 taught in the Five Year and the 292 in the earlier Ten Year Program. Basically the material is being spread out over a longer period of time -- an additional year of elementary school. In addition there has been a reduction in the number of periods for Chinese Language per week from 13 to 11.

Some improvements in the Six Year Program edition over the Five Year Program include a better layout and improved format with some pages rearranged for clarity. There are larger, more colorful pictures in the Six Year edition, and contain more color than the Five Year edition.

Also there seems to have been a change in the policy on homework. Formerly homework was assigned to first graders, but it

appears that this policy has been discontinued. Now according to the General Program or national curriculum plan, no homework is assigned in first grade.

THE FIRST SEMESTER OF GRADE ONE OF CHINESE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Learning through using pictures and illustrations is an important methodological teaching tool which continues to be used throughout the Chinese language textbooks for the first three grades. Illustrations are used to teach oral language, vocabulary, concepts and sentence structure. They help provide the basic content for student practice in Putonghua. The oral and written vocabulary of the books and Putonghua are taught simultaneously with learning to read.

Chinese students learn to talk about a passage before learning to read it. Language is taught in all its aspects, not in just its visual or written form. Of course this is especially critical in dialect areas of China where Putonghua is not spoken, or where it is very different from the local dialect. In these regions, Chinese language class is more like a foreign language class. Making sure that the students understand the vocabulary before they learn to read it is an excellent reaching strategy. This practice is especially necessary when children learn to read words that they do not use or understand fully in their oral language.

Consistent with this belief, the illustrations in the Chinese readers are intended for instruction, not simply to beautify the page. The illustrations for each lesson are systematically studied and discussed. The structures of the sentences of the reading

lesson are reviewed and practiced prior to reading the lesson, using the illustrations as a stimulus for the discussion.

The Basics of Pinyin

The first three to four weeks of first grade in Chinese language class are spent learning the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet or Pinyin. Children are required to be able to read and write the letters. Teachers are emphatically instructed that students should not be required to phonetically annotate characters, or be able to write syllables.

For Mandarin speaking children the demand is similar to what English speakers experience when learning the alphabet. Later, words are introduced in Pinyin as well as Chinese characters. Pinyin for Mandarin-speaking children is relatively easy as alphabets go, since the letters very closely represent the sounds. But for non-Mandarin speaking children, learning to read in Mandarin is more like learning to read in a second language. Imagine the situation if all Romance language speakers learned to read in Italian.[21] This means that some Chinese children read words which are not in their oral vocabulary, and perhaps have to make sounds or variations of a particular sound which are not in their local dialect.

Learning Pinyin is only the beginning step. Pinyin is used to annotate new characters as they are introduced. Not all new characters in a story are required to be mastered. Some will be reintroduced later for mastery. Once characters are introduced, children may learn nineteen or twenty characters a week. The total

number of characters learned in Volumes 1 and 2 in first grade declined from 709 to 696 to 630 from the Ten to the Five to the Six Year Program editions. However there are still approximately 3,000 characters learned in elementary school. More than 2,000 are learned in the first three grades, and the rest are learned in the remaining years of the six year elementary school program (See Table 3).

Remember, however, that the introduction of an alphabet is only a means to an end--learning the Mandarin pronunciation of characters. The far more difficult task is still to follow--mastery of another dialect (for many), and learning to read and write Chinese characters.

What is distinctive in the materials used to introduce Pinyin is that the letters are usually introduced in the context of a word, accompanied by a representative picture, and not as an isolated sound. The shape of the letter is somewhere in the picture, and the picture is of the word. So sound, meaning and picture are integrated for the children making it very concrete to learn. Altogether over 80 illustrations are used in the Five Year Programs to introduce and teach Pinyin in this way. This type of mnemonic device is quite effective in teaching beginning readers to associate letters with their sounds.[22] Letter names are not used until second grade, and only lower case or small letters are used in first grade reducing the number of symbols which need to be learned initially to 26, not 52.

Learning Characters through Pictures and Pinyin

Children begin to learn some basic strokes and simple characters which represent one character words. All new words are annotated in Pinyin, and the students learn the Putonghua pronunciation of these words at the same time they learn to recognize the characters. The illustrations which accompany each lesson are very realistic and literal. They depict as closely as possible the meaning of the new word or words. No doubt this visual clue is particularly helpful in dialect areas where the Pinyin pronunciation is unfamiliar to the students.

Putonghua

Fairly regularly, teachers are told to make sure that the students are pronouncing the words correctly in Putonghua and are not giving dialect renditions. From time to time the teacher's guide points out specific words which are likely to be mispronounced in Putonghua and gives articulatory directions for the pronunciation of the sound. The students begin each lesson by discussing the pictures in the text in order to develop the oral vocabulary prior to reading the Pinyin for the character.

Writing

Flash cards or a small blackboard are used to introduce the new characters, and students are occasionally told to "write them in the air and then copy them on paper." Other techniques for learning difficult characters include counting the number of strokes and tracing them in the air before writing them down on paper.

Although the students are expected to be able to read the Pinyin annotations of the characters and even practice Pinyin in exercises, the teacher's manual explicitly states that students should not be required to write the Pinyin for the new characters and words. Since students spend only three to four weeks learning Pinyin, this really is not enough time to master it, and not requiring students to master writing does seem a reasonable expectation given the time factor.

Chinese children learn to write characters and/or words at the same time that they learn to recognize them. Calligraphy (penmanship) is taught as part of the overall lesson with writing reinforcing reading. This is a particularly valuable strategy for learning. Handwriting exercises are a part of every lesson as well as constituting an eleventh hour of Chinese Language class each week. As they learn new characters children receive specific directions on stroke order and radicals. Integrating reading and writing in this way, with the added activities of tracing and recitation insures that children use all learning modalities--visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile.

Although the teachers' manual stresses the necessity for practice in writing the new characters, it is not clear whether enough time in school is allowed for sufficient drill. Since they spend only one period a week on writing and have no homework, learning to read and write 19 characters a week makes a heavy demand on memory. In one beginning lesson the children learn eleven new characters in two periods, and they are expected to

master nine of them for use in both reading and writing. The remaining two are nonrequired, or secondary characters, and children are only expected to be able to read these through the aid of Pinyin. These are high expectations for such a limited amount of time.

Pictophonetic Characters

When pictographic characters are introduced, the students are shown how these characters evolved from pictures of the actual objects they represented. By the ninth week of school students are directly taught simple characters which combine with radicals to form pure pictophonetic characters. They are taught to use the sound and the meaning elements to understand the new characters, i.e. the two parts of the character for "Mama" (also pronounced "Mama" in Chinese) consist of the radical meaning "woman" and the phonetic loan for "horse" which is also pronounced "ma."

Reading Sentences

Characters and words are now introduced in sentences to the children for the first time. Students must learn what a sentence is in order to learn the purpose of the "period." In Lesson 1 of the Five Year Program the very first sentences read are "The Communist Party loves the people." and "The people of the whole nation love the Communist Party." The first of these sentences is omitted in the Six Year edition, probably in the effort to reduce the number of characters in that volume. In Lesson 2 children learn to read, "I love Beijing. I love the People's Republic of China."

Although more sentences could be made from the number of words already introduced, the lessons in the first eleven weeks contain no more than three sentences. Apparently the only practice children get with the new characters is to reread the text again and again and practice writing the new characters. Most likely the students recite these same sentences over and over until they are memorized. The probable rationale is that this will be sufficient for the child to be able to recognize the new characters in a different context. One problem with this approach is the possibility that a child could recite the text from oral memory without being able to read the characters. In addition to considering oral reading and rereading a way to learn to recognize new characters, the manual also recommends this practice as a way to teach reading comprehension. This is an altogether questionable idea, as merely repeating words does not make them meaningful.

Context vs. Isolation

In the first few lessons, not all the new words and characters are introduced in the context of the sentences. They are introduced in a limited context, however, because they are illustrated by pictures, which are fully discussed, before the students read the sentences and phrases.

The material is constructed so that consistently meaningful units, words learned in context, are learned as opposed to words in isolation. This is the basic methodology of the Chinese Contextual Teaching Method in which characters are introduced within the context of a meaningful word in a sentence. The general principle

is that characters are embedded in words and sentences, and that the students should learn characters through context. The methods and the materials stress that meaning is very important in learning the character.

In addition to learning the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (Pinyin), Chinese first graders learn to analyze characters according to their parts. The teacher's role is to help the children examine the difficult part and to offer suggestions (sometimes given in the teacher's guide) for remembering those parts likely to cause errors in writing. In the case of parts similar to others in appearance, the teacher will point these out for the student and show them in contrast. Practice exercises which follow groups of lessons in the children's book often reemphasize these points. All learning modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile) continue to be used for learning and drilling new characters. This practice becomes so habitual that it is not unusual to see an adult tracing the strokes of a character on his or her hand in order to remember how to write it.

Mastery vs. Nonrequired Characters and Words

The first and second volumes for teaching Chinese in first grade characteristically contain two categories of characters, those words and characters for which mastery is required (can be both read and written) and others, called secondary or class two characters, which need only be read (not written). All new words in a story appear written in both characters and Pinyin. Teachers are cautioned against turning secondary characters into ones

required for mastery. Of the 282 characters which are introduced in Volume 1 of the Five Year Program, 254 of these are required for mastery and 28 are secondary ones.

Undoubtedly the reason for doing this is that it is quite difficult to write interesting stories with such a limited number of characters. Pinyin annotation offers a way for the writers to write richer stories by using characters which will be reintroduced later for mastery. Those children who are capable of learning the nonrequired ones might learn these as well as the required ones.

Expository Content

In addition to traditional children's material, students are introduced to material about the Party, agriculture, science and technology and good behavior. In a poem about the planets, there is quite a lot of detail provided in the teacher's guide about the sun, the earth and the moon with respect to size, rotation, and so on. Although it assumes a very low level of scientific knowledge on the part of the teacher, some information is conveyed through the material included in the textbooks in Chinese language class.

Memorization and Recitation

Individualization or small group instruction does not occur in Chinese language class, and class size is often around fifty children. The class as a group reads the passage over and over until it is virtually memorized. In fact, the teacher's guide tells the teacher which stories the children should memorize, as opposed to those which should just be reread several times.

In learning Chinese, reading orally is considered a critical way of learning to read the characters and understanding the content of the lesson. Oral reading is also the method through which children lean to speak Putonghua since Chinese language class involves, not only learning to read, but also learning to speak Mandarin as well. In developing speaking skills, oral recitation and memorization has a little more validity.

Oral recitation, really choral reading or oral interpretation, is a practice in more advanced Chinese language classes, and adults use oral reading as a way of studying any new material. Chinese testing practices reflect this obsession with memorization, and frequently test just for memory of the text.

Memorization of texts is an ancient Chinese practice which dates back to the Confucian classics and old imperial civil service exams. One had to have committed the classics to memory before even sitting for the test. In some respect this is related to the nature of the writing system which requires the memorization of so many characters. Also, traditionally, the language of the vernacular was quite different from the literary language of texts; and memorization of outstanding examples from literature provided models to emulate in writing. This distinction between literary language and the vernacular still exists today.[23]

Naturally memorizing a passage is not the same as learning to read it. There is, however, some indication that this practice has some positive benefits for American children with reading disabilities. Chomsky conducted some research with young children

who had severe reading problems[24]. They listened to tapes of books as they read along until they could recite the text from memory. These books were then used as the basis for word identification activities based on a whole word approach. In fact, Chomsky herself compared their learning to the process of learning Chinese.

While virtual memorization of texts is an ancient Chinese method, this does not necessarily make it the best method.[25] Much has been learned about the process of teaching and learning. Memorizing texts might be useful and/or justified for slow learners and those children from dialect areas where there are large differences between the local dialect and Putonghua. But it can hardly be justified as an across-the-board method for average Putonghua-speaking children.

Aside from the extent of recitation of the text in class, an important question is whether children get enough practice in learning to read and to write characters? Granted, there has been a reduction in the number of characters learned at the various grade levels in Chinese language class. Since there is no homework required in first grade and only eleven hours a week is spent in Chinese language class, including the period for handwriting, is this sufficient time for all the children to learn the nineteen new characters a week introduced in Volume 1?

Research shows that the amount of time spent on homework by first graders in Taiwan is 77 minutes a day. By fifth grade, Taiwanese children spend 114 minutes a day doing homework.[26] Reports indicate that the methods used to teach reading in Taiwan

are similar to the methods used in China. Unless the children in China are being voluntarily drilled on recognition and writing of characters by their parents, it seems likely that actual achievement in both reading and writing in China may be quite poor for the children of less advantaged, non-intellectual parents and peasants.

Oral Reading

The almost mystical belief in the wisdom of oral reading continues to be promoted as it is throughout elementary Chinese language instruction. The manual states that oral reading both prepares students for silent reading and aids in comprehension. Along these lines, teachers are told they must also model good oral reading for the students and provide instruction in the use and pronunciation of difficult words and phrases. In Chinese language class children learn listening and speaking as well as reading and writing. The questions at the end of the lessons, the pictures accompanying the lessons, reading aloud, and reciting from memory are all used as methods of promoting oral and written language development.

Built into the curriculum is the fact that the amount of time allocated over the course of a semester is greater than the total number of hours suggested for teaching each of the lessons. One might assume then that where dialect differences are great, more time is spent on individual lessons; and students are given more practice.

Differences in Content of Volumes 1 and 2

Except for length, there is not a great deal of difference between Volumes 1 and 2 which continues in the same manner. Both contain new and traditional children's stories such as fables, etc., expository material oriented toward science and technology, moralistic or political stories, riddles, and poems. What is different between volumes is that Volume 2 has much less emphasis on teaching Putonghua and much less assistance in the teacher's guide in general except for instructions on teaching stroke order.

THE SECOND YEAR OF CHINESE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Volumes 3 and 4 continue in much the same pattern as the previous volumes. Again we see a definite trend in the reduction in the number of characters introduced in the Five and then in the Six Year editions. Naturally, this resulted in some changes in the content of some of the stories. Sometimes characters or stories were introduced later in the same volume or moved to a subsequent volume. Some stories were rewritten to reduce the number of characters. A story might have been used in a different type of lesson, or dropped entirely.

Except for the degree of difficulty, Volumes 3 and 4 are similar in terms of content, philosophy and methodology. All four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are taught in Chinese language class; and oral language is developed along with reading and writing ability. Teachers model the reading; students imitate either chorally or individually. While much less help is given in the teacher's guide for teaching Putonghua than in

previous volumes, students are still expected to develop oral language ability while learning to read and recite the lessons. Being able to paraphrase the story in their own words is seen as a way or preparing students for writing essays in third grade, and is an excellent activity for demonstrating comprehension.

Oral reading is still the predominant method for helping students comprehend the texts, and this is believed to form the basis for silent reading in later grades. Oral reading and memorization are seen as ways of learning new characters and understanding the text. The teacher's guide does say that memorization should not take place until the student have understood the material.

The largest proportion of characters learned in elementary school are learned in the first two grades. In the Ten Year Program, approximately 55% of the characters learned in the five years of elementary school are learned in the first two years. This increases somewhat in the next two revisions to 63% being introduced in the first two grades. Somewhat more characters are introduced in second grade than in first grade in all three editions. While the number of new characters introduced declines after Volume 4 in all three editions, old characters combine to create new words. (See Table 3 for data.)

The Concentrated Drill Method of Learning Characters

Although this method first appears in Volume 2 of the Ten Year Program, it begins in Volume 3 of the Five and Six Year programs. Approximately half of the characters introduced in Volume 3 of each

of these editions are introduced through a method variously translated as the Concentrated Drill Method or the Concentrated Character Method. In contrast to previous instruction in characters, these are characters which are not introduced in the context of a sentence or a story.

These new characters are not introduced in total isolation, but have a limited context of a word, phrase or sentence in order to clarify meaning. These characters have some commonality with respect to either pronunciation, structure or meaning. For example a group of characters would be introduced belonging to the same meaning category, such as words for animals or vegetables. Characters making up words and their antonyms might be introduced in a group, or characters sharing some principle for writing Chinese characters would be introduced together.

Most of the characters introduced through this method are used in the following sections of the textbook in the context of stories. Some of the characters introduced through this method might be characters which were used in earlier stories or volumes but were not required for mastery. Now students are to learn how to read them, write them and use them orally. Reading, writing and oral language are taught in this integrated fashion, a very good way of assuring that students master what is taught.

Some of the skills practiced in Volume 3 are continuations of earlier ones such as Pinyin, Putonghua, oral language development, thinking skills, telling the story from a picture or pictures and understanding figurative language. Others are some new skills

which are introduced in Volume 3 such as learning the use of the semicolon and quotation marks, learning how to look up words in the dictionary according to pronunciation, and learning upper case or capital letters.

Oral language continues to be important, and there is heavy use of pictures to practice new words and phrases, retelling the story from a picture, practicing dialogues and demonstrating the ability to make oral distinctions between different kinds of sentences such as declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative.

Volume 4 continues developing all the skills learned in Volume 3 such as Pinyin and Putonghua as well as introducing some new advancements. In the second semester of second grade the children are expected to be able to write the alphabet from memory, and there is also more mention of writing in the teacher's guide. Some of the writing exercises at this level include sentence making and sentence completion, filling in the blanks, copying difficult characters, copying paragraphs and even copying the whole text of a lesson.

Also beginning in this volume, students learn to use a calligraphy brush and ink for writing characters. The children practice by tracing over characters printed in red on special paper. Some other new skills include learning the use of the colon and dash, learning to look up characters in the dictionary according to their radicals, writing a paragraph after looking at

pictures, writing an application for joining Young Pioneers, and writing a short diary.

THE THIRD YEAR OF CHINESE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

The third year of Chinese language instruction and the volumes used to teach it follow in much the same pattern as preceding volumes. The main difference in the contents of the third year volumes is that the Concentrated Drill Method is no longer a major method of instruction.

The content of the stories in Volumes 5 and 6 is very similar to that of the previous volumes. There are stories of revolution, science and the Four Modernizations, fables, rhymes, tales and legends. Stories are also chosen to help develop observational ability, dialectical thinking, study habits and patriotism.

Unlike the earlier volumes, in the third year only one kind of lesson uses pictures. These contain a single picture related to the text. Earlier volumes had a series of pictures which were used to develop oral language and reading. While the single pictures are still used to develop oral language and observational ability, the focus shifts to the story itself. In these two volumes new emphasis is placed on writing ability, especially the ability to write paragraphs. Students practice getting the main idea of a paragraph and generate summaries.

A new emphasis on vocabulary development appears in the third grade. Students are now expected to look up new characters prior to the lesson, taking care to find the correct definition of the new characters. Again students continue with oral reading of all

the lessons, reciting some of them from memory. More emphasis is placed on both writing and silent reading in the third year. Students are to practice reading silently after they have read the material orally, without moving their lips, muttering, or using their fingers.

In Volume 5 children begin to learn how to summarize the gist of a paragraph, a skill further developed in Volume 6 when students are asked to paraphrase the paragraphs of a lesson. Students do much more writing in this year, copying and taking dictation.

The development of writing ability in first and second grade evolves from learning to write complete sentences to writing a paragraph. In grade 3 students write compositions on assigned topics, and they learn to write short narrative stories. Always writing is closely integrated with reading.

Students are encouraged to begin reading extracurricular stories for children. At the same time, however, teachers are cautioned against assigning some of the exercises in the text for homework. The reason for this shying away from homework is not clear. Apparently there is some public resistance to it, and it may just accentuate the differences between the better and poorer students.

By the end of the third grade students have learned most of the characters they will learn in elementary school. They should also be able to write with clarity using paragraphs correctly. The children have also spent much time in third grade in learning about main ideas in paragraphs and should be able to generate a simple

outline from material based on this skill. The manual states that this should help students distinguish between important and secondary ideas, and help put events in sequential order.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the first three grades of elementary school Chinese language materials from the People's Republic of China reveals that national policies with respect to popularization of the standard dialect--Mandarin--are reflected in beginning Chinese reading and writing instruction. Children receive instruction in Mandarin or Putonghua pronunciation simultaneous with learning to read and write in Chinese. Changes in the different editions of elementary reading materials since the Cultural Revolution also show that as elementary schools have returned from a five to a six year curriculum, the number of characters taught at each grade level elementary schools have decreased spreading them out over the six years.

Two basic methods are used to teach Chinese characters. The first method is called the Contextual Teaching Method. In this method new characters are taught within the context of a meaningful word and sentence. The other method is chiefly used in the second grade and is called the Concentrated Drill Method. In this method groups of characters with some commonality of meaning, structure or pronunciation are taught. A large number of characters are taught this way so that by the end of second grade students have learned more than half of the number of new characters they will learn in elementary school.

Several methods reflected in these primary reading and writing materials are quite good. All of the language abilities--listening, speaking, reading and writing--are taught in an integrated fashion from one textbook as children learn to speak the language of the text--Putonghua--before they learn to read it. They learn to write the words they read, and all of these skills are taught through a multi-modal approach--auditory, visual, kinesthetic and tactile. This makes sense for many Chinese children since they are learning a second dialect in addition to learning to learning to read and write a very difficult language. There is even some merit to their common practice of repeated oral reading of the stories.[27]

In criticism, however, much of what goes on in Chinese language class reflects traditional methods which may not always be the best ones. The amount of oral reading is excessive at the expense of silent reading. Rote memorization of the texts does not necessarily mean that one can read them or can read the characters out of context. Silent reading rarely occurs, and the policy on limited homework is likely to negatively effect the achievement of children from homes where there is little emphasis on education.

In general though, Chinese language textbooks attempt to provide not very highly qualified teachers with basic methods and materials for teaching reading and writing to a wide variety of children of different intellectual backgrounds and dialects at a realistic cost for a third world country. This is done with one book for each semester of elementary school. Considering the

linguistic, political and economic factors which affect education in China, while there is room for improvement, the materials studied reflect practicality, ingenuity and a long tradition for teaching Chinese.

FOOTNOTES

1. Insupt Taylor and M. Martin Taylor, The Psychology of Reading, (New York, Academic Press, 1983); William S-Y Yang, "Language Structure and Optimal Orthography," in Perception of Print: Reading Research in Experimental Psychology, eds. O.J.L. Tzeng and H. Singer, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers, 1981).

2. Jack Goody (ed.), Literacy in Traditional Societies (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

3. John DeFrancis, Nationalism and Language Reform in China (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1950).

4. State Statistical Bureau of China, "The 1982 Census Results," Beijing Review 25 (1982): 20-21.

5. John DeFrancis, The Chinese Language (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1984).

6. "About China's Languages," China Reconstructs, (Beijing, Foreign Languages Press) 27 (1978): 42.

7. William S-Y Wang, "The Chinese Language," Scientific American 10 (1973): 50-60; E. Marcia Sheridan, "Literacy and Language Reform in the People's Republic of China." The Reading Teacher, 34 (1981): 804-808; E-L Zhou, "Current Tasks of Reforming the Written Language, Reform of the Chinese Written Language (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1958).

8. Taylor and Taylor; Y-G Zhou, "To What Degree are the 'Phonetics' of Present Day Chinese Characters Still Phonetic?" Zhongguo Yuwen (in Chinese) 146 (1978): 172-177.

9. D.J. Li, The Ageless Chinese: A History (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965).

10. Constantin Milsky, "New Developments in Language Reform," The China Quarterly 54 (1973): 102.

11. Harriet Mills, "Language Reform in China, Far Eastern Quarterly 15 (1955-56): 518-538.

12. E-L Zhou; Mills.

13. E. Marcia Sheridan, "Recent Efforts for Teaching the National Language in the People's Republic of China," paper presented at the 2nd International Conference on Literacy and Languages of the International Reading Association, Bangkok, Thailand, August 22, 1987.

14. No editors are mentioned for the Ten Year Program books.

15. At the time that this study was begun, both Ten and Five Year Program materials were being used. Currently Six Year Program materials are being published. However, due to the limited availability of materials for this research, a mixture of editions has been analyzed. When Six Year materials were available, comparisons were made among editions. Because not all manuals and children's books were available for each edition, sometimes analyses were done on the manual from one edition and the children's book from another.

16. The following statement is printed in both Volume 1 and Volume 3 of the children's books of the Five Year Program:

"The first (and third) volume of the Elementary School Language Text for the Five Year Program is re-edited based on an

experimental edition of the first (and third) volume of the Elementary School Language Text for the Ten Year Full Day Program. The original editor of the experimental edition was the Editing and Writing Group of Elementary School Language, General Texts for both High and Elementary Schools.

The editor in chief of this volume is Yuan Weizi, the editors and writers are Xin Naizhen, Liang Junying, He Huijun, Qian Qinzhu, Cai Yuqin and the responsibility editor is Liang Junying. The reviewer (authorizer) is Ye Liqun.

During the process of experimental trial of the book, the vast number of the language educators all over the country had proposed many valuable opinions. Here we would like to offer our sincere appreciation."

17. On the inside cover of Volumes 1-4 of Chinese Language Text for the Six Year Elementary School Program there is the following statement:

Explanation

The texts for elementary school Chinese Language for the Six Year Program are editions based on the texts for elementary school Chinese Language for the Five Year Program. In comparison, the teaching requirements and the format of the material is basically the same. The one exception to this is that the amount of material is reduced so that there is more teaching time in the middle and upper grades so that teachers everywhere can use supplementary material.

The editor-in-chief of the first volume is Yuan WEeizi, the editors and writers and Xin Naizhen, Liang Junying, He Huijun, Qian Qinzhu, and Cai Yuqin. The responsible editor is Xin Naizhen. The reviewer (authorizer) is Ye Liqun.

We hope that the vast number of language educators all over will make criticism and suggestions for revision of this book."

18. There are minor differences in the editorial staff of Volumes 2-4. They read:

"The editor in chief for the second volume is Yuan Weizi, the editors and writers are Xin Naizhen, Liang Junyin, He Huijun, Qian Qinzhu, and Cai Yuqin. The responsible editor is Xin Naizhen. The reviewer (authorizer) is Liu Guozheng."

"The editor in chief for the third volume is Yuan Weizi, the editors and writers are Xin Naizhen, Liang Junying, He Huijun, Qian Qinzhu, Liu Yongrang, Cai Yuqin. The responsible editor is Liang Junying. The reviewer (authorizer is Ye Liqun."

"The editor in chief for the fourth volume is Yuan Weizi, the editors and writers are Xin Naizhen, Liang Junyin, He Huijan, Qian Qinzhu, Liu Yongrang, Cai Yuqin. The responsible editor is Liang Junying. The reviewer (authorizer) Liu Guozheng."

19. These constraints were due to the availability of materials as teachers' manuals are not sold in bookstores, but are instead distributed directly to teachers in their schools.

20. Richard C. Anderson, "Impressions of Comprehension Instruction in China," in Reading in China: Report of the U.S. Study Team to the People's Republic of China, ed. June Y. Mei,

(Washington, D.C., Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1984): 68-76.

21. DeFrancis (1984).

22. L.C. Ehri, N.D. Deffner and L.S. Wilce, "Pictorial Mnemonics for Phonics," Journal of Educational Psychology 76 (1984): 880-893.

23. DeFrancis (1984).

24. Carol Chomsky, "After Decoding: What?" Language Arts 53 (1976): 288-296.

25. June Y. Mei, Introduction, in Reading in China: Report of the U.S. Study Team to the People's Republic of China, ed. June Y. Mei, (Washington, D.C., Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1984): 1-6.

26. Harold W. Stevenson, "Making the Grade: School Achievement in Japan, Taiwan and the United States," Center for Advanced Study in the Behavior Sciences, Annual Report, 1983, (Stanford, California, 1984): 41-51.

27. Thomas H. Anderson, "Study Strategies and Adjunct Aids," in Theoretical Issues in Comprehension: Perspectives from Cognitive Psychology, Artificial Intelligence, Linguistics, and Education, eds. R.J. Spiro, B.C. Bruce and W.F. Brewer, (Hillsdale, New Jersey, Erlbaum, 1980): 483-502; S. Jay Samuels, "The Method of Repeated Reading," The Reading Teacher 32 (1979): 403-408; Chomsky.

TABLE 1

WORDS WITH MEANING ELEMENT "WATER"

YÁNG	洋	OCEAN
HǍI	海	SEA
HÉ	河	RIVER
BŌ	波	WAVE

TABLE 2

PHONETIC ELEMENT "MEN"

	SIMPLIFIED	TRADITIONAL
door (mén)	门	門
suffocate (mēn)	闷	悶
plural personal (mēn)	们	們
cover with palm (mén)	扪	捫
cook in a casserole (mèn)	焖	燜

(Notice the character for "door" appears in the other words which are pronounced "men" regardless of the tone.

Table 3

NUMBER OF CHARACTERS REQUIRED IN CHINESE LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS

Volume and Edition	Required	Not Required	Cumulative 10 yr. Total	Cumulative 5 Yr. Total	Cumulative 6 Yr. Tot.
Volume 1 10 year	292(cb)		292(cb)		
5 year	282(tm)	28		282(cb)	
6 year	260(cb)				260(cb)
Volume 2 10 year	420(cb) 417(tm)	204	712		
5 year	414(cb)			696	
6 year	370(cb)				630
Volume 3 10 year	488(cb)1 486(tm)2		1200		
5 year	480(cb)			1176	
6 year	450(cb)				1080
Volume 4 10 year	485 (cb) 485 (tm)	71	1685		
5 year	484(cb)			1660	
6 year	433(cb)				1513
Volume 5 10 year	388(cb)3 388 (tm)	73	2073		
5 year	381(cb)			2041	
6 year	389(cb)				1902

Volume and Edition	Required	Not Required	Cumulative 10 yr. Total	Cumulative 5 Yr. Total	Cumulative 6 Yr. Tot.
Volume 6 10 year	350(cb)4 351 (tm)		2423		
5 year	300(cb)			2341	
6 year	384(cb)				2286
Volume 7 10 year	180(cb)5 182 (tm)		2603		
5 year	204(cb)			2545	
6 year	194(cb)				2480
Volume 8 10 year	207 (cb) 207 (tm)		2810		
5 year	231(cb)			2776	
6 year	197(cb)				2677
Volume 9 10 year	115 (cb) 115 (tm)		2925		
5 year	174(cb)			2950	
6 year	127(cb)				2804
Volume 10 10 year	143 (cb) 143 (tm)		3068		
5 year	150(cb)			3100	
6 year	131(cb)				2935
Volume 11 6 year	127(cb)				3062

Volume 12 6 year	128(cb)			3190	

cb: children's book

tm: teacher's manual

*Cumulative numbers based on cb totals.

1. Taken from children's book, Volume 3, 1st edition, printed January, 1979, first printing, May, 1980.

2. Total from Teacher's Manual, Volume 3, 1st edition, printed March, 1979, first printing, July, 1979.

3. Teacher's Manual, Volume 6 says that in Volume 5, 394 new characters are introduced for study (p.2). Also see children's book, Volume 5, 1st edition, Feb. 1979, 1st printing, May 1979, Shandong. The figure 388 is taken from both the Teacher's Manual, Volume 5. and the children's book, Volume 5, 1st edition, February, 1979, second printing, April, 1980, Jiangsu.

4. The figure 350 is taken from children's book, Volume, 6, 1st edition, June, 1979, fourth printing, October, 1982, Jiangsu.

5. The figure 180 is taken from children's book, Volume, 7, 1st edition, January, 1980, first printing, April, 1980, Jiangsu.

APPENDIX

A LIST OF THE MANUALS AND TEXTS STUDIED

Teacher's Manuals

Program	Vol.	Edition	Printing	Province
10 year	2	1st, Sept. 1978 3rd, Apr. 1981	1st, Nov. 1981	Jiangsu
	3	1st, Mar. 1979	1st, Jul. 1979	Jiangsu
	4	1st, Jul. 1979	2nd, Nov. 1980	Anhui
	5	1st, Mar. 1979	1st, Jun. 1980	Anhui
	6	1st, Jul. 1979	1st, Nov. 1979	Shandong
	7	1st, Feb. 1980	2nd, May, 1981	Shandong
	8	1st, Jul. 1980	2nd, Nov. 1981	Jiangsu
	9	1st, Feb. 1980	3rd, Apr. 1982	Anhui
	9	1st, Feb. 1981	2nd, Jul. 1981	Anhui
	10	1st, Jul. 1980	2nd, Nov. 1981	Shandong
5 year	1	1st, Dec. 1981	1st, May, 1982	Anhui
6 year	1	1st, Aug. 1984	2nd, Jul. 1985	Sichuan

Children's Books

Program	Vol.	Edition	Printing	Province
10 year	1	3rd, Jan. 1981	5th, Jun. 1981	Zhejiang
	2	2nd, May 1979	3rd, Oct. 1980	Jiangsu
	3	1st, Jan. 1979	1st, May, 1980	Jiangsu
	4	1st, June 1979	3rd, Oct. 1981	Jiangsu
	5	1st, Feb. 1979	1st, May, 1979	Shandong
	5	1st, Feb. 1979	2nd, Apr. 1980	Jiangsu
	5	1st, Feb. 1979	4th, May, 1982	Jiangsu
	6	1st, June 1979	2nd, Oct. 1980	Jiangsu
	6	1st, June 1979	4th, Oct. 1982	Jiangsu
	7	1st, Jan. 1980	1st, Apr. 1980	Jiangsu
	8	1st, June 1980	2nd, Oct. 1981	Jiangsu
	9	1st, Feb. 1980	2nd, Jun. 1981	Jiangsu
	9	1st, Feb. 1980	3rd, May 1982	Jiangsu
	10	1st, June 1980	2nd, Oct. 1981	Jiangsu
	10	1st, June 1980	3rd, Oct. 1982	Jiangsu
Provincial	7	4th, June 1979	1st, Jun. 1979	Jiangsu
5 year	1	1st, Oct. 1981	1st, May, 1982	Jiangsu
	2	1st, Apr. 1982	1st, Oct. 1982	Jiangsu
	3	1st. Oct. 1981	1st, May, 1982	Jiangsu
	4	1st, May 1982	? , Oct. 1982	Jiangsu
	5	1st, Oct. 1982	1st, May 1983	Jiangsu
	6	1st, Feb. 1983	2nd, Oct. 1984	Jiangsu
	7	1st. Oct. 1982	1st, May, 1983	Jiangsu
	8	1st, Mar. 1983	1st, Oct. 1983	Jiangsu

5 year	9	1st, Nov. 1982	2nd, Dec. 1983	Jiangsu
	10	1st, Mar. 1983	1st, Oct. 1983	Jiangsu
6 year	1	1st, Nov. 1983	1st, Apr. 1984	Shandong
	2	1st, June 1984	1st, Oct. 1984	Shandong
	3	1st, Dec. 1983	1st, May, 1984	Shandong
	4	1st, May, 1984	1st, Oct. 1984	Shandong
	5	1st, Sep. 1984	1st, May, 1985	Shandong
	6	1st, Sep. 1984	1st, Sep. 1985	Shandong
	7	1st, Oct. 1984	1st, Apr. 1985	Shandong
	8	1st, Nov. 1984	1st, Sep. 1985	Shandong
	9	1st, Nov. 1984	1st, Apr. 1985	Shandong
	10	1st, Dec. 1984	1st, Sep. 1985	Shandong
	11	1st, Dec. 1984	2nd, Jan. 1986	Shandong
	12	1st, Jan. 1985	2nd, Oct. 1986	Shandong